

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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This is UNEVALUATED Information

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1. There are strong rumors in Prague to the effect that the Presidency of the Republic will be abolished after the expiration of President Antonin Zapotocky's present term. A fight for power appears to be on between First Vice-Premier Alexej Cepicka and Communist Party First Secretary Antonin Novotny. Zapotocky's position appears to become progressively weaker. The statement in his speech at Straznice in June 1955 that it must not be forgotten that the American, British, and French also helped to defeat fascism received no publicity in the Czech press or radio. His speeches are often printed only in part.
2. Unofficial reaction among lower and medium echelon government officials to Soviet overtures to Tito has been one of bewilderment. "Completely illogical" is the phrase most used in referring to them. The man in the street also is bewildered but is happy to see the apparently obsequious Soviet behavior to a former satellite.
3. When Nehru was in Prague en route to Moscow in June 1955, rumors were current "everywhere in Prague" to the effect he had a mission to discuss alleviation of Soviet domination of Czechoslovakia. Rumor had it that free elections were to be held in the future under the supervision of impartial observers from the Netherlands.
4. Slovak separatism is still a potentially explosive problem despite the attempts by Premier Viliam Siroky to stress unity in his speeches. When the French drama group touring Czechoslovakia in June visited Prague first and then Bratislava, Slovak Culture Commissioner Kiss¹ welcomed them in Bratislava and half seriously asked why they had gone to Prague first.
5. "All classes" of the population fear the renaissance of German military might and the consequences of German sovereignty for Czechoslovakia. The Communists now fear an American withdrawal that would leave the Germans a free hand to start beating the drums for the Sudetenland. This fear is most adroitly exploited in the Czech press and radio.

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6. The general reaction to the current leaflet campaign against the regime has been poor. The more sensational items are outdated. Agricultural workers feel propaganda should contain positive hints on how to improve farm production and show pictures of late models of American farm machinery. People are afraid to pick up leaflets, which are generally read surreptitiously and left on the ground.
7. Communist exploitation of the redefector Kucera's return and subsequent speeches denouncing the regime on the Prague radio backfired because the ill language Kucera used made a poor impression. It revolted all intellectuals and left many people with the belief the whole affair was a put-up job on the part of the regime.
8. Evidences of partial unemployment since January 1955 include a stepped-up release of women from industry in the Prague metropolitan area, and the appearance of "situation wanted" advertisements in the Prague press beginning June 1955. Factory workers are being released for periods up to three months for work on abandoned farms in the western border areas.

1. Comment. As received.

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